WOMEN AND JOURNALISM

This book offers a rich and comprehensive analysis of the roles, status and experiences of women journalists in the United States and Britain. Drawing on a variety of sources and dealing with a host of women journalists, ranging from nineteenth-century pioneers to Paula Zahn and Kate Adie, the authors investigate the challenges that women have faced in the struggle to establish their reputations as professionals. *Women and Journalism* provides an account of the gendered structuring of journalism in print, radio and television, and speculates about women’s still-emerging role in on-line journalism. Women’s role in the management of mainstream newspapers and television stations is assessed, with a consideration of what difference gender can and does make. Women’s accomplishments as war correspondents are tracked to the present, including their work covering the war in Afghanistan.

The book is unusual in its contrasting women’s contributions to mainstream and to alternative news media. It examines the strategies that women have adopted to resist their marginalization in male-dominated media management by charting women’s independent press, radio, television and Internet initiatives in the United States and Britain. With respect to mainstream journalism, women have been redeployed within the rise of a postmodern style of journalism distinguished by an emphasis on confessional and therapy ‘news’, often in the name of a market-led ‘post-feminism’. The authors conclude by addressing women’s contribution to public discourse and their role in the age of interactive news media.

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A note on usage

Writing a book for readers on both sides of the Atlantic presents its own challenges, particularly when the authorship is also transatlantic. Since the publisher is British we have written the book in British rather than American English. This is unproblematic on the whole, but the accepted terms for racial groups are not the same on both sides of the ocean. Thus we have used a mixture of terms—African American, women of colour, black journalists, white women, and so on—and have tried to be sensitive of context (‘women of colour’ being used with regard to the US, for example). We have avoided the initial capital in ‘Black’ or ‘White’ as this is unusual in British usage, We have also avoided the use of black or white as nouns, as this is potentially offensive in both cultures.
Introduction

Women and Journalism in the United States and Britain

Women journalists present a paradox. Their presence as professional writers and presenters of news is now commonplace, yet they continue to be marked as ‘other’, as ‘different’ from their male colleagues. In print news, official rhetoric proclaims that a journalist’s gender is irrelevant. However, while maleness is rendered neutral and male journalists are treated largely as professionals, women journalists are signified as gendered: their work is routinely defined and judged by their femininity. We find that women have not achieved equality either in several ‘serious’ fields of news such as politics and business or in the highly popular and lucrative area of sports news. Women are still concentrated in sectors considered to be ‘soft’ news, such as those with an emphasis on ‘human interest’ stories, features and the delivery of a magazine-style of journalism. In television where spectacle counts—emphasis on the decorative value and even the sexualization of women journalists is overt.

Women television news presenters and correspondents continue to be subject to regular comments and complaints about their appearance: their clothes, hair and voices are scrutinized far more intensively by both management and viewers than those of their male counterparts. In a comment still relevant today, Patricia Holland (1987:133) said of women newsreaders on British television during the late 1980s, ‘The imposed limits of femininity, it seems, cannot easily be cast off, particularly in the hard world of news reporting’. The personal lives and bodies of women journalists are often dissected and debated in the news media. This treatment comes from news media’s top management, apparently in response to audiences’ curiosity. Indeed, the high social visibility of women journalists in popular discourses contrasts with their relative invisibility in boardrooms and at other senior management meetings.

This book examines the status, practices and experiences of women journalists working in the United States and Britain from the nineteenth century to the present. We analyse women’s influence on changing news agendas, news values and the very parameters and meanings of public knowledge and ‘news’, using historical sources to contextualize women’s contemporary position in the profession. Our aim is to show how news processes on both sides of the Atlantic have been largely, although not exclusively, shaped by gender and how the organization of the news and of the newsroom, as well as assumptions about gender and women, have affected women’s performance and potential as journalists.

Within a historical frame but with an emphasis on the last fifty years, we investigate how women have helped change journalism and their role in journalism. We analyse women’s influence on the ways that audiences use and respond to news. We also
examine how conventions and assumptions about gender play out differently in specific areas of news journalism such as war reporting, discussed in Chapter 10. Chapters 7, 8 and 9 tackle women’s alternative news media, stretching from women’s print periodicals during the suffrage movement in the late nineteenth century to feminist experiments with radio and television, and on to even more recent uses of Internet sites.

Our argument can be summarized as follows: although the number of women in journalism has risen impressively over the past two decades, this rise has been patchy. Women have not yet reached a critical mass in ‘serious’ news beats. Moreover, they remain a minority in the top management jobs in news organizations, where a glass ceiling continues to limit women’s promotion to key decision-making positions (see Chapter 4). Women continue to face sexism in the newsroom. Given that social conventions insist that women assume the major burden of childcare, working mothers suffer from a newsroom culture demanding long hours and offering a lack of childcare facilities. They have resisted and forced a certain amount of change; they have pushed for and then utilized equal opportunity policies. They have challenged sexism in the newsroom. Women’s expansion in numbers at the lower rungs of the professional hierarchy and in television broadcasting, where an attractive and youthful femininity is still demanded, have coincided with key changes in the agendas, styles and topics of news. Their central participation in these changes has led, however, to the stereotyping of this emergent style of news journalism as ‘feminine’ news.

This shift in news styles raises important questions about the distinctions between the rise of a market-led set of news values in mainstream journalism described below, especially in Chapter 11, and alternative news media. We argue that a market-led post-feminist journalism masquerades as a kind of news that promotes women’s issues. To paraphrase Patricia Holland (1987:136), the history and even more recent experiences of women in journalism demonstrate repeatedly that ‘women’s right to speak in public may easily be subverted’ by drawing attention to their femininity and the habitual questioning of their communicative competence. However, as we demonstrate, women have a long history of working in and for alternative media, where they can foreground women’s issues and even promote radical causes and needs, such as those of the lesbian community and of women of colour. We argue that women journalists’ roles in recent developments in mainstream news journalism and also alternative news media (including Internet newsgroups) raise important questions about women’s part in advancing women’s voices in the public sphere. We examine feminist contributions to debates about Jürgen Habermas’s (1989) concept of the ‘public sphere’ to explore these issues.

**Women journalists as spectacle**

Women journalists find that they are not only deliverers but also objects of news. During the period we were writing this book several women journalists became spectacles, part of the news themselves, in a manner which was peculiar to their femininity. For example, a marketing campaign in the US in 2002 to promote CNN anchor Paula Zahn raised a number of issues about the status of women in news journalism, when the promotions department—apparently without approval from Zahn or CNN top management—ran a
fifteen-second television advertisement for Zahn showing her profile and lips, with a voice saying, ‘Where can you find a morning news anchor who’s provocative, super-smart, oh yeah, and just a little bit sexy?’ The words ‘PROVOCATIVE’ and ‘SEXY’ flashed on the screen and the sound of a zipper being unzipped was heard when the music stopped (De Moraes 2002: C1). Zahn is a highly experienced journalist who has interviewed dozens of prominent political leaders and heads of state. She has worked in several major cities across the United States, was an anchor and co-host for both CBS and ABC, and hosted her own daily news programme: The Edge with Paula Zahn at Fox News Channel, until Fox fired her for engaging in employment talks with its arch-rival CNN. She started working for CNN on 11 September 2001.

When Zahn made it clear that she was offended by the advertisement, CNN Chairman Walter Isaacson called the campaign ‘a major blunder’. James Kellner, chairman of Turner Broadcasting, which owns CNN, immediately demanded that the advertisement be pulled. He had already been challenged for hiring a television actress from the police drama series NYPD Blue (among others) to anchor the Headline News. The ad was quickly scrapped and the issue died down with only a few cynics noting that Zahn, who reportedly earns $2 million a year, has been inducted into the Celebrity Legs Hall of Fame Internet site (Ager 2002).

Many column inches and much airtime was devoted to Yvonne Ridley who was sent in 2002 by the Sunday Express to Islamabad, where she crossed the border into Afghanistan and was captured by the Taliban. As discussed in Chapter 10, after being released Ridley received hostile press from several fellow British journalists for placing herself and her local guides in danger. Ridley was also condemned for taking unnecessary risks because she was a single mother with an eight-year-old daughter. As Helen Carter of the British broadsheet newspaper the Guardian asked provocatively, ‘Should Yvonne not have put herself at risk because she was a woman and a mother?’ (Carter 2001:9). Moreover, Ridley’s three marriages were scrutinized by the news media.

BBC foreign correspondent Kate Adie (2002) recounts in her autobiography, which was serialized in the Guardian, her experience of being pursued by the news media as the sole woman in a twelve-member press team covering the Gulf war in 1990. Already a household name by the time she was assigned to Kuwait and Iraq, she was preoccupied with trying to fit into the military uniform and keep tabs on the extensive equipment—from water bottles to a nuclear biological chemical kit—the British Army gave all reporters. In addition, she said:

I was also bothered by the attentions of the newspapers. Obsessed with a Woman Going to War, at least one paper sent a reporter to track my moves and get ‘a few embarrassing snaps’. And at home, a woman MP [Member of Parliament] wrote a snide piece containing the ridiculous fiction that I’d lost my pearl earrings and ‘soldiers had been hunting for them in the sand’… The feeling of being sneaked up on by a fellow hack intent on making life difficult was unsettling. I was finding things quite hard anyway, although the Army had not once showed me any prejudice or seemed in the least irritated by having to accommodate a female in a unit of 2,000 men. I was in my mid-40s, relatively fit and keen to do my best, but I was worried that I’d fail to make the grade in
some way. And if I did, I felt I’d be letting down a lot of women back in Britain who thought that I ought to be able to hack it. I didn’t want to stand out and ‘be the exception’: I just wanted to get on with the job—without complaining: a whingeing woman was just what the papers would have loved. 1

Interestingly, Adie says her single status has drawn comment throughout her well-publicized career. She is regularly asked: ‘Why aren’t you married?’ and ‘Has your career prevented you from finding a partner?’

Some biographers have even sexualized their female subjects in a way that is virtually unheard of with respect to male journalists. One of the most egregious examples is that of Marguerite Higgins, a Pulitzer prize-winning war reporter, whose biographers describe her attractiveness and stance of sexual liberation as much as her ambition (Schilpp and Murphy 1983, May 1983). Julia Edwards (1988:191), whose discussion of other women foreign correspondents is celebratory, if not adulatory, attacked Higgins, her Columbia journalism school colleague, comparing her to Marilyn Monroe: ‘pretty, talented, sexy, and painfully insecure’. Even Edwards, however, is forced to note that while Higgins’s enemies accused her of sleeping with men to obtain her stories, her lovers were mainly fellow correspondents. Moreover, Edwards (1988:196) concedes that male foreign correspondents who cheated on their wives aroused no criticism.

We argue in this book that women have been the object of the public gaze ‘as’ women, that is, for their status as mothers or their single-woman status, for their oddity or difficulties as women war reporters or as women bosses, and for the sexism they face from male colleagues.

‘But I don’t do weddings’: women’s entrance into the profession

While there is a great deal of noise about women journalists in the media, how women have dealt with both professional and personal issues in terms of training, recruitment, promotion prospects, and how they have confronted sexism has attracted far less noise. Comparing the history, roles and status of women journalists in the United States and in Britain sheds light on organizational factors attributable to gender or, more specifically, to sexism. It is not our intention to add ‘great women’ to the ‘great men’ approach to history in this book. Instead, we believe in the importance of the patterns that emerge from their lives, understood collectively and historically, including what they have said about their experiences in their memoirs, autobiographies and interviews, as well as taking into account what others have said. Our aim is to arrive at an understanding of how, when and where women’s gender has mattered in the context of journalism. And certainly some specific themes emerge from these stories about women journalists fairly consistently over two centuries, including their demand to be treated as equals and as ‘professionals’.

Whenever possible, we consider how the assumptions about ‘women’ as a category are often disguised assumptions about white women. The claims that newsrooms were open to women long ignored the extent to which newsrooms, especially mainstream newsrooms, remained closed to women of colour.

Importantly, the issue for women journalists is not always one of being denied jobs on
account of gender. For decades women were refused most reporting jobs by men who said: ‘It’s no job for a woman’. These days, it is more complicated. Whereas maleness is taken for granted, women are ‘signs’ within the masculine narratives of news discourses (Rakow and Kranich 1991). The intersecting themes that run through this book and the manifold ways in which gender is still meaningful, can be seen in the story of Liz Trotta who, by her own admission, is no feminist but who seems to have confronted at some level nearly every variety of sexism invented. Having originally been told by the New York Times editor that ‘It’s not a job for a woman’, Trotta (1991:21) was eventually hired by a network executive who specifically wanted a ‘girl reporter’. Trotta (1991:37) said she wanted to persuade WNBC ‘that I wasn’t “a girl reporter” but a reporter who happened to be a girl’. When a network producer wanted her to cover the wedding of President Lyndon Johnson’s daughter, Trotta (1991:58) said firmly, ‘But I don’t do weddings… Oh, I don’t mean to be rude, but I don’t work on women’s stories.’ Yet NBC promoted her to publicize its news, and capitalized on her persona as ‘girl’ reporter. Later, she faced an NBC field producer who was constantly knocking on her hotel room door.

Parrying his amorous advances became part of my daily routine. At that point sexual harassment was not even a concept, let alone an actionable offense, so I swallowed hard and decided it was just another affront to be absorbed by any woman who wanted to succeed.

(Trotta 1991:66)

Eventually she complained and the offending male field producer was transferred.

Relevant sources on women in journalism

In the last few decades, large-scale surveys of journalists have generally included gender along with other factors of age, social class, race, educational background, training, rank, responsibilities and so on. Such statistical data allow comparisons of men’s and women’s career patterns and professional advancement (Gallagher 1995, Weaver and Wilhoit 1996, Delano and Henningham 1995, Henningham and Delano 1998). However, given that such surveys are rarely designed to focus specifically on gender issues, the findings of gender difference are often schematic rather than conclusive. For example, survey data indicating that male journalists are on average older than female journalists does not explain its significance in terms of women’s career patterns and advancement. The age difference may suggest that women do not stay in the profession as long as men; but this data does not explain whether this difference is attributable to the lack of promotion prospects for women, lack of childcare support, a male-dominated newsroom culture, or something else. In parallel, we draw on content analyses to shed light on the extent to which there are differences in the ways that men and women gather and report the news. For example, analyses of news content suggest that, compared to men, women reporters tend to focus on issues affecting women’s lives, personalities and personal views more often, approach women as news sources more often and use a broader definition of news in developing a human-interest angle (Covert 1981, Mills 1997, Meyers 1997, Skidmore
1998, Christmas 1997). Nonetheless, this kind of evidence, as with any other kinds of data, must be contextualized rather than essentialized.

We draw on qualitative as well as quantitative sources in our analysis of women journalists’ recruitment and promotion patterns, and also in our discussion of gendered newsroom cultures and values. A range of research based on in-depth interviews with women journalists also supports our analysis, providing insights into women’s experiences in particular journalistic specialities and indicating their interpretations of such issues as equal opportunities, newsroom cultures and attitudes of male colleagues to women journalists. In the first two chapters we provide a historical context for an understanding of the issues and debates about the current position of women journalists discussed later. Chapter 1 traces women’s contribution to mainstream journalism from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, when women were being allowed into the profession on men’s terms, that is, from the early days of an expanding mass media to the Second World War, when women began to break into jobs once reserved for men because men were sent to war. We focus on the social pressures women experienced and the lengths they had to go in order to be taken seriously by their male counterparts and the media public.

While some women were able to break into the male enclave of newspaper journalism from the mid-nineteenth century, Chapter 1 emphasizes that women were treated as consumers rather than producers of news. When newspapers began to rely increasingly on advertising revenue from the 1880s onwards, a new form of ‘women’s journalism’, mainly fashion and society news, emerged to attract women readers. For educated middle-class women, journalism was regarded as a glamorous career enabling them to break out of feminine confinement to the domestic sphere. None the less, women were associated with—and assigned to—journalistic styles and topics widely deemed as outside ‘serious’ reportage. The emergence of ‘women’s pages’ ensured that women journalists played a central role in feature writing and stories aimed at women. In 1903, an entire, if shortlived, paper was aimed at ‘gentlewomen’ in the UK, the Daily Mirror. Beyond that, women’s role in mainstream journalism was producing sensationalism and human-interest stories.

A dilemma facing women journalists from the start was that the very notions of ‘objectivity’ and ‘impartiality’ were anchored within a partial, male-oriented construction of knowledge, reportage and ‘news’ which produced a patriarchal framework for the professionalization of the occupation. News about women’s issues was ignored or sensationalized and women readers were widely regarded as interested only in ‘gossip’. Certain issues were either rarely aired in the mainstream news media or reported unsympathetically, such as women’s social and economic subordination and the demand for women’s political, educational, employment and domestic rights. The fact that femininity was associated with the domestic sphere assured women journalists’ prominence as curiosities and as suppliers of ‘women’s news’ to draw women readers. However, until the introduction of equal opportunities principles and laws in the late twentieth century, it was only in alternative news media that women consistently enjoyed opportunity to take on decision-making roles as editors and controllers of the press.

The two world wars not only provided opportunities for women to enter journalism in larger numbers but also to advance their careers by entering the field of ‘serious’ news,
including war reporting. It may even be argued that women initiated the human-interest approach to war reportage. Women were long barred from war reporting by being denied accreditation by the military, but some found ingenious ways of circumventing these barriers. In any case, many women were pushed out of newsrooms when the wars were over.

However, the emergence of the women’s pages and features in early-twentieth-century newspapers not only prompted a rise in the number of women journalists but also provided a space for airing, from the late 1960s, feminist debates. As Chapter 2 describes, the women’s page gave rise to new styles of newspaper journalism. Despite its accent on human-interest stories, the women’s page often subverted the conventional values of 1950s’ suburban domesticity with the introduction of important feminist debates about equal opportunities in employment, equal pay, childcare, divorce, abortion and so on.

Radio began in the United States in 1920, three years earlier than in Britain. Programming in both countries was generally aimed at housewives, with an emphasis on fashion and beauty, as Chapter 1 shows. In Britain, the strict moral code of the BBC established by Lord Reith ensured that women journalists would play only a peripheral role in British radio for decades after its inception. Although women were denied access to the airwaves, they played a major part in shaping broadcasting behind the scenes, even rising to senior positions, as with the case of Hilda Matheson, who became the BBC’s Head of Talks in 1927 and who spearheaded a more informal style of reporting.

The voice of British radio, however, was strictly masculine; except for the rare administrator, women were audiences and consumers, and were not heard on air. Women fared better in American radio during this period: Judith Cary Waller became the first woman manager of a radio station by 1922. As with print, the Second World War provided significant opportunities for women to advance in American radio as presenters and war correspondents. By the 1940s women were in charge of educational and public services on all four of the US radio networks. However, women were held back in both the US and Britain by men’s assertion that women’s voices were too high-pitched and thus lacked authority. Women seeking jobs on-air, as with print, were confined to programmes aimed at women.

In the UK, women were virtually barred from reading the national news on BBC radio. They were not employed as newsreaders on a regular basis until the 1970s. Men were typically awarded the more interesting reporting jobs such as foreign assignments and riots. Women were assigned celebrity interviews and human-interest stories. One programme bucking the trend was the BBC’s Woman’s Hour. This radio programme was originally designed to help women returning to the domestic front after the Second World War, but it quickly extended its remit to include women’s social inequality and related issues. By the mid-1970s it was accepted that women reading the news on British local radio provided much-needed diversity to break up the relentless dominance of male DJs who introduced the music.

Women in the United States were likewise able to enter television broadcasting at a much earlier stage of the medium’s history than in Britain, with Frieda Hennock being appointed as first US woman commissioner for the Federal Communications Commission in 1948. In 1971, six women were newsreaders on NBC alone. By contrast, during BBC Television’s early years, British women were banned from reading the news until 1960,
when Nan Winton was appointed—even then, only on an irregular basis. Objectivity was associated with masculinity. Magazine programmes on television aimed at women were, like radio, typically composed of fashion, cookery and childcare tips, relegating women’s interests to the domestic sphere. Not until 1975 did BBC Television employ Angela Rippon as its first regular female newsreader. This marked the beginning of the pattern of employing women news anchors for their appearance rather than their journalistic skills. While greying and balding men were able to continue as presenters, older women were identified as inappropriate to the medium. During the 1970s producers and directors of programmes, editors of newspapers and decision-makers across the news media were invariably men.

From the 1970s onwards in both Britain and the US, women were employed by news organizations in larger numbers when the crisis of shrinking numbers of women readers was exposed by the strong competition between newspapers, radio and television. Women readers and audiences were wooed by female journalists with a new kind of news that related to their lives. Likewise, women journalists were called upon to provide feature stories on American and British television and to contribute personalized, human-interest accounts of the women’s page, even of such major events as the Vietnam War. In Chapter 2 we show how the style influenced definitions of news right across the media. Newspapers began increasingly to emphasize both contextualization of the news and personalized accounts.

**Education and training of women for journalism**

Important contrasts between the education and training of journalists in Britain and the US have impacted on the employment patterns and progress of women in the profession. We argue that the availability of an academic degree eventually had a crucial effect on the advancement of women journalists by providing opportunities to train in a relatively egalitarian environment.

With university degrees in journalism being offered at the start of the twentieth century in the US but not until the end of the twentieth century in Britain, the professionalization of the occupation has been slower in the UK. Chapter 3 shows that the British on-the-job model of journalism training, on a trade union basis, significantly disadvantaged British women wishing to enter the field.

Yet women at universities in the US had to endure academic textbooks that addressed students as male and assumed all journalists would be male. These early texts offered no analysis of gender divisions and the gendered structuring of the profession. We assess the extent to which such programmes acknowledged women’s interests in acquiring ‘serious’ professional education as journalists or offered specialized training to cover topics aimed at women. Analysis of vocational literature, textbooks and other teaching materials shows that journalism education has long discouraged women who entered journalism programmes from pursuing journalism as a serious career. Although today, options and courses are provided on gender issues, key journalism texts still fail to address gender centrally. Moreover, the presence of women lecturers in journalism classrooms influences the performance of female students: the more women teaching the subject, the better
female students perform (Grunig 1993).

**Women’s contemporary status in journalism**

Over the last twenty or twenty-five years, in both the US and UK, women have begun to achieve critical mass in certain subfields and to break through the barriers to decision-making positions. However, we argue that women’s increasing presence in the profession does not necessarily indicate their empowerment within media structures. Chapter 4 explains that they remain concentrated at the lower echelons of the profession while men continue to dominate top management positions in the newspaper, radio and television industries.

The phrase ‘glass ceiling’ refers to an invisible barrier to promotion that women experience in many professions. We argue that it has not yet been shattered. It is true that women are now able to negotiate non-hierarchical management models more conducive to their needs and to introduce new ways of working, including flexible hours, job shares and childcare support in order to undermine the culture of long hours traditionally associated with journalism. As yet, however, there is no evidence of women managers effecting an acceleration of the promotion of women from junior ranks. Women also report that they continue to experience sexism in the newsroom, with 60 per cent indicating they have either experienced or witnessed prejudice against women (Henningham and Delano 1998:148, Ross 2001).

Although women are still largely absent in such areas as political reporting, they have contributed to a distinctive shift in news agendas and priorities, as Chapter 5 describes. While there is little consensus between women themselves about whether the rise in the number of women journalists have made a difference to news values and newsroom culture, it has been argued that women have transformed newsroom culture by their central involvement in widening definitions of news. However, the evidence is contradictory and suggestions that women have spearheaded changes in definitions of news values have been questioned. For example, as we discuss in Chapter 10, some women journalists and scholars argue that women tackle a wider range of wartime events than do men (Edwards 1988, Elwood-Ackers 1988, Rouvalis and Schackner 2000).

However, other researchers dispute the idea that women write differently from men (Weaver and Wilhoit 1996, Weaver 1997, Henningham and Delano 1998). Many of the changes in news values have been prompted by commercial imperatives and, as such, women continue to be typecast by being assigned fashion, lifestyle and education or health issues, a practice that implies they are incapable of dealing with ‘hard’ news. Nevertheless, Chapter 5 offers evidence suggesting that traditional masculine news narratives have been challenged by women’s increased presence in the profession.

Chapter 6 examines in detail how women sometimes challenged sexism and gender discrimination in journalism. By obtaining the support of already established trade unions, guilds and press associations, women have challenged discriminatory practices regarding hiring decisions, salary levels, assignments and promotions, especially in Britain. When women failed to rouse interest and support from these organizations, as was often the case, especially in the US, they created their own. Some of these were
established within specific news organizations, others were state-wide (in the case of the US), or regional, while still others coalesced around specific interests.

Working both with these organizations and independently, women not only advocated women’s employment interests but also registered grievances with national hearing bodies and filed legal suits. Several US cases where women took legal proceedings against employers inspired useful attention in and about the news media. The case of Christine Craft, a US television reporter who sued her employer after she was fired for being ‘too old, too ugly, and not deferential to men’, exemplifies the kinds of suits women took on. That said, even when women were victorious in court, the court-ordered remedies frequently failed to mandate sustained or systematic changes on the part of employers. So these efforts generally produced only short-term gains for the individual complainants, rather than leading to a large-scale transformation of the workplace. In Britain, equal employment practices in public-service broadcasting have sometimes been effective, but mostly in the lower-status regions rather than the prestigious London headquarters of the BBC.

The cultural and structural barriers to promotion, the ghettoization of women in particular fields of journalism and their lack of promotion have persuaded many women to develop and use alternative news media to advance women’s causes and to publicize women’s issues, concerns and experiences. Women have developed more co-operative and collective ways of working together to transcend the patriarchal management practices and hierarchical structures that excluded them from decision-making roles within mainstream media. Women have used their own specialized media to create, defend, explain and celebrate new identities, new roles and new worlds for women.

Chapter 7 distinguishes mainstream from alternative and advocacy journalism, and explores the role women have played in developing such alternative productions as women’s newspapers, newsletters and magazines to sustain feminist movements, such as the suffrage movement, and support social change. We focus on women’s achievements as activists and their use of alternative print news as a vital avenue for publishing and disseminating their views and events during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially during the first wave of feminism in the US and Britain. Chapter 8 addresses how alternative periodicals challenged the mainstream media of the 1980s that purveyed images of a self-assertive, self-motivated superwoman within a congratulatory but depoliticized discourse. Well-known popular feminist publications, such as off our backs and Ms. Magazine in the US, and Spare Rib in Britain, demonstrate that radical feminist newspapers and magazines within independent publishing were themselves important contributions to the public reshaping of women’s news.

In Chapters 8 and 9, we explore the journalistic successes and failures of smaller institutions representing various sexual, political, professional or vocational interests—including lesbian groups, women in management and black women—for an understanding of the forms and processes of alternative women’s journalism in both countries. While mainstream images of women were addressing women as career women yet also largely as consumers, radio and television documentaries were speaking to women as participants in policy formulation, as democratic citizens, by promoting women’s issues and advocating equality. Chapter 9 describes the development of women’s radio stations and programming, women’s broadcast and cable television...
programmes and women’s Internet newsgroups. The alternative press, radio, television and Internet newsgroups, have allowed and even encouraged women to participate in the process of changing women’s lives, beginning by training women to use printing and the press, broadcasting and Internet techniques.

Although high levels of burnout are routine in women’s alternative media, this form of journalism constitutes an important realm of journalistic practice that has in turn impacted on mainstream journalism. Alternative media have been crucial in promoting social change, recruiting and bolstering new converts, and in inventing effective ways to defend social movements to wider society. Echoing the earlier struggles of women in journalism at the end of the nineteenth century, the marginal status of women globally has prompted these continued initiatives through the use of the Internet and has promoted the formation of links between women in Western and developing nations. The Internet is proving to be a successful medium for socially excluded groups since it provides the potential to transcend national boundaries and establish cyber communities. Throughout its history, women’s alternative news media has addressed the public as citizens rather than as consumers.

Chapter 10 examines women’s work as war correspondents during transnational conflicts from the late nineteenth century to the so-called war on terror of 2001. Women journalists’ presence was strongly seen during the Vietnam War, but even then they ventured into a masculine environment and Gloria Emerson continued to encounter prejudice from the military and from fellow male reporters. During the 1982 Falklands War, the British government forbade women to travel to the Falkland Islands, evidence that progress for women war correspondents continued to be slow. But, successful foreign correspondents such as the BBC’s Kate Adie are still judged by their appearance rather than their competence. Nevertheless, we find that women have disrupted the emphasis on ‘bullets and bombs’ typical of traditional masculine reporting styles and contributed a new style of reporting war news emphasizing civilian sufferings, the systematic rape of women, and other intended and unintended ‘side-effects’ of war.

Women have proved their flexibility and adaptability by forging new approaches to war journalism: they have developed original angles, tending to focus more on the human suffering resulting from wars and less on military actions. In doing so, they confirmed their ability to attract news audiences. After the September 11th 2001 attacks on the US, women journalists—reporting on American bombing of Afghanistan and the overthrow of the Taliban forces—were conspicuously displayed on television news broadcasts. Despite the fact that most women broadcast journalists were anchored in the studios, it led to a public news media debate about the risks of sending women war reporters out to war zones. As wives and mothers they continue to suffer from a kind and level of hostility and public disapproval that men with families do not face.

We identify some worrying current trends which indicate a return to practices and representations of feminine individualism under the guise of a celebration of ‘popular culture’ while ignoring political, pedagogic and professional feminism. Chapter 11 examines how women are contributing to this shift, involving not only an emphasis on human-interest stories but also the rise of confessional and therapy news. Recent trends in mainstream journalism indicate a shift to a postmodern approach that addresses audiences first and foremost as consumers. It emphasizes personal writing styles, sensationalism,